Dear Directors and Members of the Polish American Congress,

The Christmas season is a time of giving and sharing, as well as time of reflection and giving thanks. I certainly am grateful for many things in my life, especially for those that have made a difference and are doing so on a daily basis. As President of the Polish American Congress, I am fortunate to be surrounded by a team of officers and directors who are dedicated and committed, working toward the same goal. It’s a team effort which leads us to success. Reflecting on this year, it certainly was a historical year for Poland and Poles across the world, with Poland regaining its independence 100 years ago. With all the celebrations taking place across the world, it’s only evidence of the pride that our community has regardless of where they reside. We are in the Holiday season, I’d like to extend my best wishes to you and your family for a very Blessed Christmas filled with joy and love. May 2019 be packed with prosperity, with happiness and excellent health to you and your family.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Frank J. Spula

Frank J. Spula, President

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Future PAC Newsletters will be sent out:

Deadline for submission        Publication date
Friday, February 7, 2019        Friday, February 14, 2019
Friday, April 5, 2019           Friday, April 12, 2019
Friday, June 7, 2019            Friday, June 14, 2019
Friday, August 2, 2019          Friday, August 9, 2019
Friday, October 4, 2019         Friday, October 11, 2019
Friday, December 6, 2019        Friday, December 13, 2019

"Your Voice in America" newsletter is published bimonthly by the Polish American Congress. The purpose of the newsletter is to offer PAC National Directors and PAC Executive Committee members the opportunity to share news and information about their state divisions and offices. The newsletter does not receive funds from any external source. The editor is Dr. Mark Pienkos.

Articles should be between 100 and 400 words. Some editing will be done to match our style guidelines and spatial constraints, as well as correcting grammatical errors. We do not send proofs for approval. When sending photos, please include captions with names, official titles. All submitted materials become the property of the Polish American Congress and may be used to promote the mission of the PAC. Materials will not be returned unless requested.

Articles are due according to this schedule. Send your submissions to PAC National VP for Public Relations, Mark Pienkos at markpienkos2012@gmail.com.

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As President of the Polish American Congress, and on behalf of the PAC Executive Committee, our PAC members, Polish Americans throughout our great country, as well as our many friends, I extend my deepest sympathies to the President George H.W. Bush Family upon his passing. The death of the 41st President of the United States brings to mind the numerous times President Bush supported Poland’s quest for freedom. As we say farewell to a decorated World War II veteran, as well as a consistent fighter for freedom during the Cold War, I wish to thank President Bush for his support of the Solidarity Movement that resulted in Poland becoming free in 1989.

Polish Americans stand in unity with Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, who recently noted after President Bush’s passing the following words spoken during the Solidarity era. These words ring true today as they did in 1989: “Today, to those who think that hopes can forever be suppressed, I say: Let them look at Poland. To those who think that freedom can be forever denied, I say: Let them look at Poland. And to those who think that dreams can be forever repressed, I say: Look at Poland! For here in Poland, the dream is alive.”

During his long career in public service, Mr. Bush traveled to Chicago and visited the Polish National Alliance headquarters. He was warmly received. As Vice President, Mr. Bush also attended the funeral wake for Aloysius Mazewski, Polish American Congress and Polish National Alliance President. For his genuineness and caring support, we are so very grateful.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Spula, President
Polish American Congress

Note: In an excerpt from his book, For Your Freedom Through Ours, author Donald E. Pienkos, Professor Emeritus, reprinted President George H.W. Bush’s speech in Hamtramck Michigan, April 1989. He said: “You know when I visited Poland in September 1987, I was then Vice President and I told Chairman Jaruzelski and Lech Walesa that the American people and government would respond quickly and imaginatively to significant internal reforms of the kind that we now see (following the recent roundtable talks).”

“Both of them valued that assurance. So it is especially gratifying for me today to witness the changes now taking place in Poland (re-legalization of Solidarity and the calling of special elections in June) and to announce these important changes in US policy (in supporting Poland’s economy). The United States of America keeps its promises.”

“Poland offers two lessons for all. First, there can be no progress without significant political and economic liberalization. Let us support the peaceful evolution of democracy in Poland... The cause of liberty knows no limits, the friends of freedom no borders.” Lastly, Bush concluded his remarks exclaiming: “Niech żyje Polska! Let Poland live!”

During his 1987 visit to Poland, George H.W. Bush urged General Wojciech Jaruzelski to come to terms with Lech Wałęsa. Subsequent negotiations between the regime and the opposition resulted in a peaceful transition to democracy in Poland beginning in 1989.

In 2019, look for a new feature to be added to our PAC “Your Voice in America” newsletter!

Following up on Professor James Pula’s remarks at the October 2018 Council of National Directors Meeting in Chicago, each newsletter edition during the coming year will feature at least two prominent Poles who have "made a difference" in the world as we know it today. The list of prominent people with Polish backgrounds in business, medicine, politics, and the arts is enormous. Therefore, these articles will only be the “tip of the iceberg” as far as the vast number of Poles who have "made a difference.”

Look for this new feature in the February 2019 newsletter!
On November 17, 2018, the Polish American Congress (PAC), Washington Metropolitan Area Division, held its annual Thanksgiving Dinner at the Arts Club of Washington, and honored two outstanding Polonians, Dr. Edwarda M. Buda-Okreglak, MD, and Dr. Richard Zbigniew Okreglak, PhD, who is also Sir Knight, 4th degree, in the Knights of Columbus. Both were recognized for their many years of service to the Polish-American Community. Each has served in leadership positions in many organizations in the Washington DC Area, including the Polish American Congress. The event was opened with a prayer by Rev. Fr. Jerzy Frydrych, S.Chr., Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Poland (OLQP) & St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland, who also gave the closing benediction. Among the distinguished guests was HE Piotr Wilczek, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the United States, who was the keynote speaker. The award was presented by Mr. Ted Mirecki, President of PAC WashMetroDiv.

Dr. Edwarda M. Buda-Okreglak was born in Poland but grew up in Buffalo, NY. Within 3 years of arriving in the USA, she was excelling as a student in the largest academic high school in Buffalo. She graduated as the top student and valedictorian of her high school class. She won academic scholarships to study Biomedical Engineering followed by the study of Medicine. She obtained her BS and MD degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Albany Medical College respectively, and went on to further training in institutions which included Walter Reed, NIH and Johns Hopkins, among others. She found her passion in the medical field but she also realized the need to carry on her parents’ tradition of volunteer service to “God, honor and country” (Bog, honor, ojczyzna). Also, she has had a distinguished career in the medical field and, now in retirement, continues to volunteer her time and expertise with the American Red Cross. She has served as the President of the Polish-American Health Association and the Polish American Arts Association. Dr. Edwarda has been a life-long supporter of humanitarian and charitable causes, and has been a champion and mentor of younger individuals, volunteering within both the Polish-American community and outside it, and counts among those the John Paul II Foundation and the Rowny-Paderewski Scholarship.

Dr. Richard Zbigniew Okreglak, better known as Zbyszek, was born and educated in Poland. He came to Washington, DC, over 50 years ago, as a young engineer with a professional degree of Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering. He holds a U.S. patent for an invention. He has PhD and JD degrees, and has served as President of the Polish Library in Washington, DC, and of the Polish American Arts Association. Currently President Emeritus of the Polish Library, his vision and his mentorship of younger individuals in leadership positions has resulted in the successful growth and achievements of the Polish Library throughout the past 20 years, and serves as an example of the successful transition of such leadership through different generations.

Both Edwarda and Richard have been awarded Crosses of Merit from the Republic of Poland for distinguished service. Richard has also received the Commander’s Cross. In her acceptance speech, Dr. Edwarda Buda-Okreglak recalled that it all began at OLQP many years ago. When she arrived in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area in 1974, she quickly became drawn to the vibrant community of the Our Lady Queen of Poland Mission Church. She was called upon to serve on the Parish Council and ended up as the youngest and the third Chair of the Parish Council of the OLQP Mission, as it was on its way to becoming the OLQP Parish. She and her husband remain enthusiastic OLQP parishioners.

Among the most moving moments in her life she counts the meeting, along with her husband, of Saint John Paul II, who has remained her life-long inspiration. Both, she and her husband, are grateful and proud to be American citizens who honor their Polish roots and heritage through their many acts of volunteer service to the community. They hope to be an inspiration to the younger generation, just as they were inspired by those who came before them.

The PAC Washington Metro Division Thanksgiving Dinner on November 17, 2018, where President Ted Mirecki presented the PAC Award to joint honorees Dr. Edwarda Buda-Okreglak, MD, and Dr. Richard Z. Okreglak, PhD, at the Washington Arts Club.

Photo courtesy of Dominik Mikolajczyk.
PAC Michigan Division Leads
Poland’s Regained Independence
Anniversary Celebrations

The Polish American Congress Michigan Division, as a leading Polonian organization in the State was host to numerous initiatives, projects and celebrations related to the 100th anniversary of Poland’s regained independence.

One of the biggest accomplishments of our division of PAC was creating billboards that were placed at two busy crossroads of Metro Detroit. The billboards educated commuters about Poland’s 100th anniversary of regained independence. The idea was originated by the late Dr. Thaddeus Radzilowski (President of the “Piast Institute”). After his untimely passing, PAC-Michigan decided to make this a reality. The billboard created by PAC-MI read: “100 years of Poland’s Regained Independence. 1918-2018. Thank You America! We honor Armistice Day November 11 PAC of Michigan”. The wording was placed on a white and red background, and featured the Polish and American flags. One of the billboards (a digital one) was placed on Hall Road, just east of Van Dyke; the other one on E.14 Mile Rd., near Dequindre Rd. Commuters were able to see the billboards throughout November and part of December.

Just as the billboards were created to educate the public about Poland’s history, another project served as a similar tool. Our division published a special pamphlet “Poland’s Road to Independence” which featured facts leading up to the historical date of November 11, 1918, and featured key historical figures who had the biggest impact on Poland’s regaining independence. The booklet was distributed at various events, often during non-Polonian social gatherings. The PAC Michigan Division has also produced colorful pins, bumper stickers and decals-memorabilia for our members and the general public, to display or wear proudly, as a patriotic gesture and another way of educating the public. The centennial was also the theme of this year’s Polish Day Parade in Hamtramck on Labor Day, which PAC-MI sponsors annually, and was highlighted with a beautiful themed float for many to view.

The culmination of our year-long celebrations came on November 11, when our Division hosted an elegant banquet at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy, MI. Representatives of almost all Polish-American organizations were present, as well as dignitaries from U.S. and Canada. Mr. Richard Walawender, recently appointed Honorary Consul of Poland in Detroit, gave the banquet’s keynote address. A State Senator, a Michigan Congressman, and the Michigan Governor’s Office, presented tributes and Proclamations. The event’s program also included presentations by the Polish Scouting Organization of Michigan, “Rodacy” Polish Folk Ensemble, and Adam Mickiewicz Polish Language School (whose students depicted roles of famous Polish historical figures). Among other points of the program, the award-winning choir “Filaret” performed a variety of patriotic songs, particularly the Legionnaire ones of that era, inviting guests to join in the singing. With the inclusion of all program participants and guests, we had well over 300 persons in attendance.

Interesting exhibits accompanied the banquet festivities. Dariusz Klepko (of Polish American Numismatic Society of Michigan) along with his daughter, Julia, prepared a display “The Greatest Poles and other Leaders who helped free Poland 100 years ago” which featured numismatic related items. “12 Heroes of Polish Independence” was a special display (created with the help of the Polish-Slavic Credit Union in NY) presenting the most instrumental figures in the fight for Poland’s independence. Zdzislaw Forysz shared many items from his private collection of Jozef Pilsudski memorabilia, while Jerzy Barycki, President of Polish Canadian Congress - Windsor-Chatham Chapter, shared a power point presentation “Polish Army Camp in Canada during World War I.”

Also, big kudos go to the banquet committee who, under the chairmanship of Ann Bankowski, worked tirelessly to make this event a great success!
Billboard created by PAC-Michigan celebrating the 100th anniversary of Poland’s regained independence.

Crowds at the 100th anniversary banquet listen to the keynote speech by Mr. Richard Walawender, Honorary Consul of Poland in Detroit.

Billboard created by PAC-Michigan celebrating the 100th anniversary of Poland’s regained independence.

PAC-Michigan President Ann Bankowski addresses the crowd at the banquet celebrating the 100th anniversary of Poland’s regained independence.
During the past several months, the Polish American Congress has issued a series of press releases to help readers understand the significance of 2018 in the history of Poland. The following is the final press release:

One hundred years ago, “The War to End All Wars,” “The Great War,” or the war we more commonly refer to as World War I, ended on November 11, 1918. Armistice Day. In America, Veterans Day. Significantly, November 11, 1918 is a very important day in the history of Poland. For on this day, one hundred years ago, Poland re-emerged on the world map after being absent for 123 years following its partitioning by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. On November 11, 2018, the Republic of Poland will celebrate the centennial of her regaining its independence. This is a very special day and its importance has been commemorated not only in Poland, but also in America by proud Polish Americans throughout this calendar year.

The Polish American Congress itself was founded in May 1944, when 2,500 Americans of Polish descent traveled to Buffalo, N.Y. to found this great organization. Initially established to fight for a free Poland that had been invaded and brutally subjugated by Nazi Germany, the PAC continued its fight for a free Poland during the communist occupation. The PAC oversaw hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of medical supplies, food, and other non-perishables that were sent to Poland by loving Poles and friends of Polonia following the end of World War II in 1945 until the fall of communism in 1989. Once democracy was restored in 1989, the PAC continued its support for Poland, which most notably, resulted in Poland’s admittance into NATO in 1999.

Polish Americans can be rightfully proud of their native land. In return, Poland can be rightfully proud of its many millions of sons and daughters who emigrated to America to build their own lives, as well as build a great America. Three major waves of immigration brought Poles to America: 1870-1914, 1945-1980, and 1989-present. Millions brought their dreams, their work-ethic, their heritage, strong family values, and their thirst for a better life and in the process, help build America. My four grandparents came to America in the early 1900s, while my wife and her family emigrated to America in 1959. Like their countrymen and women before them, as well as after, they strived to make their lives, families, and communities better.

That is a very brief story of Polish Americans, and readers are encouraged to learn more. Yet, why do many Americans either misunderstand or lack the knowledge of today’s Poland – one of the great allies to the United States throughout our history, as well as one of the strongest economies in Europe? Not an easy question to answer. However, one should look back seventy-plus years to gain a glimpse as to why this is the case. During World War II, Poland lost disproportionately more people than any other country. Over six million of its 35 million people were killed. Poland was also devastated economically; many towns and businesses were destroyed. And when the war ended in 1945, what happened to this war-ravaged nation? The communist government under the umbrella of the Soviet Union occupied it for another 45 years! Can you believe Poland has only been free for 30 years? Yet, during those three decades, Poland has been on a fast pace. It is an extremely modern country!

I urge readers to learn more about Poland. Better yet, visit Poland. You will find a country filled with people who love Americans. And, by the way, many speak English! (And, the food is fantastic!)
About the Author:

Elected in 2014, Dr. Mark Pienkos serves as the Polish American Congress National Vice President for Public Relations. Born in Chicago, Pienkos lived in Wisconsin where he had a very successful 45-year career in public education serving at all levels, including school superintendent. Pienkos currently resides in Sarasota, Florida with his wife Ann (Lesniewski) who emigrated to America from Piastów, Poland with her parents in 1959. He and his wife have been very active in several Polish and civic organizations. Pienkos earned his B.S.Ed. and M.S.Ed. degrees from Northern Illinois University, second Masters in Administrative Leadership from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, and his Doctor of Education Degree from the University of Southern California. In 2014, Pienkos was awarded the Cavalier’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland for his efforts to bring greater understanding between the U.S. and Poland. For more information, readers are invited to visit his website at: markpienkos.com.

Other Contributing Authors:

Dr. Patrice M. Dabrowski is an historian with degrees from Harvard University (A.B., A.M. and PhD) and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (M.A.L.D.). She has taught at Harvard, Brown, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and recently completed a three-year stint at the Doktoratskolleg Galizien at the University of Vienna. Dabrowski is currently an Associate of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and editor of H-Poland. Dabrowski is the author of two books: Poland: The First Thousand Years and Commemorations and The Shaping of Modern Poland. In 2014, she was awarded the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

Dr. John Radzilowski is an historian with degrees from both Arizona State University specializing in Modern U.S. History, Public History, Russia/East. Currently, Dr. Radzilowski is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Alaska Southeast. Among his many activities, Dr. Radzilowski is a fellow at the Piast Institute: A National Center for Polish and Polish-American Affairs and past president of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota. He is also a contributing editor for the Encyclopedia of American Immigration (second edition), plus the author or co-author of 13 books.

Dr. Donald Pienkos is Professor Emeritus (Political Science) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He earned his Doctorate (in Russian and East European politics) from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. His many publications include the histories of the Polish National Alliance (1984, 2007), the Polish Falcons (1987, 2012) and the Polish American Congress (1991). He is an associate editor of The Polish American Encyclopedia (2012). In 2010, he was awarded the Officers Cross of service by the President of Poland.

POLISH ROBOT ON MARS

The Polish-built robot landed on Mars on November 26, 2018. This hi-tech robotic device was designed and built by a Polish company landed on Mars aboard a NASA spacecraft. The device, described as a self-hammering mechanism, is a component of a heat probe that will examine the thermal properties of the Red Planet. The main goal of the US space agency’s InSight mission – launched on May 5 from Vandenberg Air Force Base in central California – is to give scientists a greater understanding of the structure and geological activity of Mars.

The InSight lander touched down safely on the Red Planet after a 301 million miles journey through space. It is expected to remain active on the Red Planet for two years. The self-hammering instrument has been developed by the innovative Warsaw Company Astronika, which was founded in 2013 by Polish engineers specializing in precision mechanics and space technology.
PAC WISCONSIN DIVISION HONORS
101 SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF WISCONSIN

Commemorating 100 Years of Polish Independence

Reported by Irena Frączek

Held annually in the beautiful Polish Center of Wisconsin, this year’s celebration of Polish Independence Day and the American Veterans Day was particularly jubilant and reflective. To commemorate the centennial of Poland’s rebirth, Polish American Congress (PAC) Wisconsin Division honored One Hundred and One outstanding individuals from Wisconsin, who in the course of the last 100 years helped Poland to regain and hold on to its sovereignty and strength.

In the spectacular gesture of gratitude and remembrance, the roll of Wisconsin’s sons and daughters read during the event included the names and deeds of Polish Americans known for their military service – mostly during Word War I and World War II, members of Polish veteran organizations, supporters of Polish independence (also from Soviet dominance), leaders and selfless workers of relief efforts for Poland, activists of Polish American organizations, defenders of rights of Polish immigrants in America, and creators and promoters of knowledge about Poland’s culture and science.

The reading of the roll followed a heartfelt salute to the veterans (especially those present in the audience) and the engaging speech about the struggles of Polish people for independence and self-determination delivered by Dr. Angela Pienkos.

Two exhibits displayed in the spacious halls of the center provided excellent opportunities to learn about the people and events leading to the restoration and cultivation of the Polish state. The stylish posters in the Grand Hall portrayed the men of victorious efforts to put Poland back on the map in the early twentieth century: Józef Piłsudski, Roman Dmowski, Józef Haller, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, John Smulski, and President Woodrow Wilson, who famously turned the re-establishment of the Polish state into one of the conditions for ending World War I.

On the other hand, the “Women of Independence” exhibit (courtesy of Polanki, the Polish Women’s Cultural Club of Wisconsin) in the Veterans’ Room presented a fascinating story of Polish women fighting for freedom along men and making outstanding contributions to science, medicine, education and the overall betterment of the Polish society.

The Roll of 101 Sons and Daughters of Wisconsin and photo galleries from this memorable event are available on the PAC Wisconsin Division website (http://pacwisconsin.com)
Dr. Angela Pienkos (previously a history professor at Ripon and Alverno Colleges, also past Executive Director of Polish Center of Wisconsin) delivered an engaging speech about the history of Polish struggles for independence.

Mark Pienkos and David Rydzewski, past and present Presidents of PAC Wisconsin Division.

Wisconsin veteran viewing the Independence Exhibit in the Great Hall of the Polish Center of Wisconsin. Credit for the exhibit goes to Mr. Jeff Kuderski, Executive Director of the Polish Center of Wisconsin, and Mr Jim Gaffney, with help from Dr. Donald Pienkos and Dr. Ewa Barczyk.

The general view.
On Tuesday, November 13, 2018, a reception was held by the U.S. State Department to honor and recognize the centennial of Poland regaining its independence. The event was held at the United States Institute of Peace, and it took place in a global political context of Kremlin revanchism; marked by serial violations of international law including the illegal use of armed force to change recognized borders. The former United States Ambassador to Estonia, Aldona Wos, Mr. Tim Kuzma, national secretary of the Polish American Congress (PAC), Mr. Ted Mirecki, president of the PAC Washington, DC Metro Division and many of its members, were among the approximately three hundred guests who attended the November 13th gala evening reception at the Institute of Peace located on the campus of the Department of State.

The highest ranking United States Government official at this event was the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Mr. Aaron Wess Mitchell, former CEO of the Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington, DC, and Warsaw, Poland based “think tank”. He observed that, “Poland endured the partitions because of her culture and faith. This is why the Polish nation survived, and this made possible the restoration of the Polish State in 1918.” The Assistant Secretary of State also said that the establishment of the Second Polish Republic required an armed struggle until the Treaty of Riga, in March 1921 that fixed Poland’s eastern boundary with the Soviet Union – approximately along the line of the Second Partition. Mr. Wess Mitchell also underlined the key historical significance of Poland’s victory over the Red Army at the Battle of Warsaw on August 15, 1920. The gist of his talk was that though the United States was the first country to recognize the Second Polish Republic, Poles needed to fight hard to establish the borders of their State against communist aggression. The Assistant Secretary of State concluded by saying that, “Today’s Poland is a source of economic vitality, and a pillar of security.”

Senator Anna Maria Anders, Poland’s Minister of Public Diplomacy, delivered a brief speech linked with today’s dangerous political context marked by Kremlin aggression. She said, “Freedom cannot be taken for granted. Theoretically, Poland was independent under communist control, but not free. We must be vigilant. Long live friendship between Poland and the United States – Partners in Freedom since the American Revolution. Ambassador Piotr Wilczek, and Poland’s Minister of National Defense, Tomasz Szatowski, delivered speeches which elaborated on ways to strengthen this Partnership in Freedom. While Secretary Kuzma and this writer extensively discussed with experts the advantages and disadvantages of a permanent NATO base in Poland, garrisoned by American armed forces, a Fort Trump.
The preeminent Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) once prayed for a universal war for the freedom of peoples. Like other Polish patriots, he realized that it would take a war of that scale for the stateless Poles—living under conditions of partition since the end of the eighteenth century—to regain their independence. The poet’s prayer was finally answered in the summer of 1914. A series of events led to war breaking out between the three partitioning powers, with Russia on one side (allied with the Entente) and Germany and Austria-Hungary (the Central Powers) on the other. This war—World War I, known also as the Great War—would forever change the trajectory of Polish history. For once, the partitioning powers found themselves at war with each other. Could Poles take advantage of the situation and win their freedom? Already preparing for eventual war was Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935). This particular Polish patriot had foreseen the way the war would play out: in a Paris lecture in January 1914 he opined that in the forthcoming war Russia would succumb to the Central Powers, which in turn would be defeated by the West. His Riflemen—a paramilitary group formed under Austrian auspices—proved to be the first Austro-Hungarian troops to invade enemy territory, making their way across the Russian border.

The prayers for universal war notwithstanding, World War I was by all accounts a human tragedy for the Poles. First, Poles were fighting in all the different armies: German, Austrian, Russian. Essentially this meant that brother fought against brother. Second, Poles were living in territories that would undergo occupation by one side after the other, for much of the eastern front ran through the former Polish lands. News of the Polish population’s suffering in the middle of the combat that raged on its home territory propelled the famous Polish novelist and Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916) and world-renowned Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) to raise funds in Europe and America to help their compatriots. Yet there was light at the end of the tunnel. Some important concessions were made to the Poles under German occupation. In November 1916, the Central Powers issued the Two Emperors’ Manifesto, in which a future self-governing Poland was promised. Nonetheless, the territories to be included in the future Polish state were not to be determined until after the war.

The Polish push for independence was aided by other developments. Shaken to the core by the two-part Russian Revolution of 1917, Russia withdrew from the war. After the February Revolution, the Russian Provisional Government allowed Austrian prisoners-of-war to form Polish military units that would join up with the Entente on the western front. These soldiers came in contact, and fought side-by-side, with Polish-Americans and other volunteers who had joined in the fight. At the same time, the need for Polish reinforcements pushed France to recognize the Polish National Committee of Roman Dmowski (1864-1939), who was agitating for a future Poland in the West, as the rightful government of Poland. Let us not forget also that, in his Fourteen Points of January 1918, United States president Woodrow Wilson advocated for an independent Polish state. The war was won by the Entente, just as Piłsudski had expected. Poles had to join forces to create that much longed-for state. Ultimately Poles of varying political persuasions, all of whom were intent on forming their own governments, rallied behind the popular Piłsudski. The military leader had arrived in Warsaw on November 10, 1918, and subsequently was declared head of a new Poland. Not only had the Poles’ prayers been answered. Universal war had finally brought about Polish independence.
Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!
Wesołych Świąt!

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Here are the steps:

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- Find: “SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER.” Click on “Subscribe”
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You’re done! See, it’s easy! Please ask others to subscribe, too! TODAY!

Thank you!

Mark Pienkos
Polish American Congress
National Vice President for Public Relations
Editor, PAC “Your Voice in America” Newsletter
Poland: The First Thousand Years
By Patrice M. Dabrowski

Since its beginnings, Poland has been a moving target, geographically as well as demographically, and the very definition of who is a Pole has been in flux. In the late medieval and early modern periods, the country grew to be the largest in continental Europe, only to be later wiped off the map for more than a century. The Polish phoenix that rose out of the ashes of World War I was obliterated by the joint Nazi-Soviet occupation that began with World War II. The postwar entity known as Poland was shaped and controlled by the Soviet Union. Yet even under these constraints, Poles persisted in their desire to wrest from their oppressors a modicum of national dignity and, ultimately, managed to achieve much more than that.

Poland: The First Thousand Years is a sweeping account designed to amplify major figures, moments, milestones, and turning points in Polish history. These include important battles and illustrious individuals, alliances forged by marriages and choices of religious denomination, and meditations on the likes of the Polish battle slogan “for our freedom and yours” that resounded during the Polish fight for independence in the long 19th century and echoed in the Solidarity period of the late 20th century. The experience of oppression helped Poles to endure and surmount various challenges in the 20th century, and Poland’s demonstration of strength was a model for others seeking to extract themselves from foreign yoke.

Patrice Dabrowski’s work situates Poland and the Poles within a broader European framework that locates this multiethnic and multidenominational region squarely between East and West. This illuminating chronicle will appeal to general readers and will be of special interest to those of Polish descent who will appreciate Poland’s longstanding republican experiment.
Founded in May, 1944, the Polish American Congress is a National Umbrella Organization, representing at least 10 million Americans of Polish descent and origin. Its membership is comprised of fraternal, educational, veteran, religious, cultural, social, business, political organizations and individual membership. The Polish American community prides itself on its deeply rooted commitment to the values of family, faith, democracy, hard work and fulfillment of the American dream. We are present in every state and virtually every community in America, on various social, business and economic levels.

The Polish American Congress, an “umbrella” organization, is a federation of over 3000 Polish American organizations and clubs, ranging from national fraternal benefit societies, such as the Polish National Alliance, Polish Women’s Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, Polish Falcons and others, including veteran, cultural, professional, religious and social associations, with aggregate membership of over one million. The PAC by-laws also provide for individual membership, as well as associate membership.

The PAC promotes civic, educational and cultural programs designed to further not only the knowledge of Polish history, language and culture, but to stimulate Polish American involvement and accomplishments.

The governing body of the PAC is the Council of National Directors, consisting of directors elected by their respective State Divisions or National Organizations and up to 10 at-large directors elected by the Council. Day-to-day operations are conducted by the Executive Committee elected by the Council of National Directors for a two year term.

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